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THE HERMITAGE
AND RANDOM VERSES
By DAYTON ERVIN



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THE HERMITAGE
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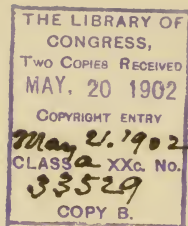
THE HERMITAGE AND RANDOM VERSES

BY
DAYTON ERVIN



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THE HERMITAGE

THE HERMITAGE.

The maples on the hill hide there the Hermitage, the strange man's Hermitage. The thick, dark wood protects it from the northern blasts while grand is the sunside view. For twenty years this man now on the shady side of middle age, has held communion with the hills which rise across the vale in ranges high and long. For twenty years he has watched the snake-like river wind along the valley—watched the woods, the fields and here and there a village shine an alabastrine group. To eastward far away the smoked-capped mountains rise like chains of dusky clouds;—how oft he's gazed beyond to scenes in mists of tears where float perchance the clouds of disappointed life. The inward void, the want which he had felt fulfilled could have made his life complete, would see a pleading face which knew a tale of life and love which he had buried here in mystery.

In days long since gone by a maiden in the bloom of womanhood, with love for nature's voice and strong religious bent, had found in his companionship a tonic for her life. She looked for him to guide her taste in books and art, while he in turn must keep each cherished thought for her, and both had felt the stir of new-born sympathy. A hearty com-

radeship they chose to think was theirs; though in their secret hearts each knew or felt that their two secrets were the same; together life was joy. One subject only stood apart in either mind and trembled at approach. They found the dreaded line where disagreement came and shunned it as a foe.

In early years he held the faith his mother gave, with Calvinistic creed. The doctrine of the church was daily served as food to grow and save his soul. As time went on the world grew larger in his sight. His speculative mind outgrew his early creed and he made search for what he thought a larger faith. Grim doubt had paid him court, his reason soon had seen how small its circle was within infinitude.

Her trust was in her love of God. She never let strange questionings disturb, and sighed at thought of his unholy heresies, and longed to conquer them. She knew his mind was far too strong for her attack and only loved the man the more because of strength and downright honesty too firm to feign to love. He viewed her simple faith with lover's tolerance, and felt the peace it held was wiser than the thought; he saw in it no bar to their full happiness.

This strong, assertive man had held his passion well subdued until it was an avalanche of love. One fateful day, a time that proved least opportune, he loosed the pent-up force of his large nature with explosive, feeling words. "O

turn not from me now," he said, "'twas you who taught me love ne'er known before!" The woman, trembling, pale, made move to speak, but he with words almost command—"Don't tell me you don't love; you're not the fickle maid; we've known of love for long." A stifled sob was her reply, and then she'd gone. Astonished, dazed, he knew not what her action meant; he felt with him was blame but hoped her act a dream. He wandered aimlessly from place to place—all strange, unearthly, everywhere, a gloom-enveloped world. A message came at last which told what she must say. "No love is like the love of God," she said, "for God is love, and you deny. No; tempt me not. If God or you must be my choice, my God I cling to Thee. Come in the fold where God approves, and consecrate your life with mine to work for Him, and then we'll live with Christ in happiness." Then came a sad adieu.

"O God!" he groaned, "and it has come to this!" In time the pain relaxed and hope looked forth; his heart had whispered what would make her answer "yes." But soon another change had come; his face was ashen pale, his head assumed a calm, determined pose,—conviction answered "no; a lie will not bring happiness." He spoke aloud "the old creed's dead in me; a wanderer with doubts"—a pause, and then a low and husky voice which knew the throes of blank despair, as from the depths be-

low, rejoined "and roam in vain." His gloom-land still remained in days that came and went. The birds sang in the trees their melancholy songs; the brook had lost its joy; the twilight's hope had gone.

She turned her pale, sweet face to God and asked for strength to bear the pain of heart. The days went by; she seemed so tender and serene, but paler, thinner grew. With much alarm her friends would watch her day by day, and turn away to hide the tear which came with thought. So young! so beautiful! so pure her saintly life! yet fading day by day. Her prayer—her grave concern,—That he should find her Christ. When left alone this thought would well the crystal tears which glistened in her eyes as loved ones approached her.

He heard of her concern for him with anguish in his heart. "I will," he cried, "respond to her dear wish;" and paced with restless feet, then stopped and moaned, "I can't." As lower ebbd the tide of life he asked to see once more the lovely face. "O spare the pain," she sobbed, "unless he welcomes too, my Savior in his life."

They never met again. One morning, May was there, kind nature was in tears; the bloom was in the grass, the bird his carol hushed, her soul had gone to God. And he, the man, soon left his childhood scenes and found the lonely Hermitage; from whence he views the young glad days; the old, sad days, with tender memories.

RANDOM VERSES

USURPATION.

I.

God-devil is the hybrid creature, man,
Immortal mortal, animal his guise.
He walks his way, the good Samaritan,
Compassionate, uplifting fallen men.
He strives for some eternal truth, maligned
By knaves and cowards, ostracised by friends.
His kindly sight sees beauty, justice, love;
In sound finds harmony, in silence, God.
His impulse from base lineage blasphemes,
Reviles his friends, his sister wrongs of wealth,
Seduces whom he can, lies, murders, steals,
Then lifts his hands blood-red with crime toward
God.

Thus death has vengeance for a day; but list!
In God's great purpose of immortal souls
Altruism opes the gates of Paradise.

II.

In far off time when man and man combined
For their defense, their silent compact held
For equal rights and equal sacrifice.
The major number held the right of sway,
For numbers count for rights among the throng.
When fitness crowned a leather-ruler, king,
His sov'reignty was delegated right,
Or usurpation of the rights of all.
A yoke of bondage never came from God;

The people will, the king must abdicate.
A nation rests in no vague entity
But lives the life and conscience of its men.

III.

The awful din has ceased; the vanquished gone;
The victor hastes the hot pursuits of death.
Beneath the stars the dead and wounded lay
On blood-wet ground from whence the groans
were heard.

But sadder than the sight of carnage there
A nation loving freedom met its death.
Henceforth a foreign race with iron hand
May dictate life and death within its realm.
O brutal conqueror! your conquest brings
You shame, your Croesus time will call a knave.
'Tis Christ who lives through ages, conquerors
Soon fade within the shade of just contempt.
Your claims of "better rule" to justify,
Old father Satan dictates for excuse.
A prison rule may make the savage tame,
But progress marks the rise of strong, free men.
Whate'er the race, responsibility
Will teach its men to govern for themselves.
O men whose fathers bled for freedom's cause!
Before the door of usurpation wait
And ponder that no subject race is free.

LINCOLN.

A sombre figure in repose, with gleams
Of humor dawning on a kindly face,
He stands erect above the heroes round,
Benign, a champion of humanity.
With mighty strokes he broke a bondman's chain,
And from the ground he raised him then a man.
This deed just done, a shot was heard. He fell—
Then fell the great, the true American!
Look once again at him, the wise and just,
And see the statesman and the honest man;
Again draw near the pulse of that great heart
Which beat so strong for rights of other men!
Aye! take one breath of that humility
Which he had known,—a waft from Calvary.

HARRISON.

A hero of the hour, he dared to stand
Against the swift, strong current of the time,
Now sweeping on engulfing rights of men.
His ear still heard the voice of Freedom call
As when 'mid battle's din he led the way
Against the force that held the black man slave.
His voice with firm, strong tones still braved her
cause
When pride of race was searching for a crown.

Silence! he sleeps while sorrow clouds our realm!
A pause—a sob re-echoes in the heart
And brave men grieve—a noble man has gone.
We bring our dearest tribute,—love of right
And love for him who is no more; and mourn
That Freedom's lost her leader in the land.

THE PENITENT'S RETURN.

My dear Republic, now I turn to thee,
A wayward son returns that he may see
His homeland as his father left it—free!
Old forms, the heroes o' childhood, come to me
And point the way toward humanity.
Again the voice of freedom bends my knee
At thy loved hearthstone while across the sea
The night winds murmur, "wrongs must righted
be."

Strange voices led me to be outward bound,
The past was meagre to this world new-found,
Where "power," "gain," were watchwords all
around;
But in our course was left the fresh-made
mound,
And then the father's words with one resound
Answered "thou walkest tyrants' ill-gained
ground."

COLUMBIA.

Decked with rare jewels, wealth at her command,
Her stately bearing stands them all in awe.
How proudly flash her cold gray eyes, with hand
Upon the helm of state, the queen of law !
The pride of self is written on her brow ;
Those tell-tale life-marks on her handsome face
Are where her broken promises made trace :
This is Columbia as she is now.

In olden days a young fair maiden stood,
The rich embodiment of strength and youth ;
Her sunny face emitted rays of good
For all, so strong her love for man and truth.
At her no finger pointed with distrust,
For young Columbia was not for lust.

THE EVE BEFORE THE BATTLE.

The eve before the battle, silent, calm,
The bivouacs of two armies line the plain.
A rifle's crack now startles—that is all.
The sentinel paces his lonely beat.
Loud throbs the soldier's heart; he thinks of home,
Love's tender face with dimpled childhood there.
A silent prayer he breathes, with heavy heart,
And leaves his loved ones to the care of God.
Across the plain his country's foe awaits
The dawn, to kill and conquer, then to rule.
The needs of home and freedom fire his soul.
He proudly lifts his head above the thought
Of death, a premonition of his fate,
Then on the ground he lies for his last sleep.

AN INVOCATION TO DEMOCRACY.

Democracy, reveal thyself to us!
Bring back thy concept that our fathers had;
Renew the zeal for individual rights,
And turn our minds from greed to principle.
Teach once again of true nobility,
That manhood is the bed-rock verity
On which the life of any nation rests.
Help us our lesser brothers to uplift;
Repudiate the thought of bartered rule;
Remind us that thou hast no king, no slave.
No ruler—all must dictate, all must serve.
Dispel the dream of empire from our midst;
Adjust our complicated life to thine,
And often turn our faces toward our God.

RETRIBUTION.

Though flows to death the life-blood of a race,
Though bandits triumph for a thousand years,
God rules. Strong Impulse with his check of
fears,

Fair Choice of Lifeways, children of His grace,
Stand waiting at the turn reflectively.
Two ways before them branch—to life, to death.
The one leads on to untold years to be,
The other only spans the human's breath.

For each "well done" God gives a recompense,
For each injustice limits sight and sense.
The true brave man stands forth with glow of
youth.

The evil speaks upon the criminal's face.
Thought widens, narrows, with the scope of truth,
Appreciation blesses man and race.

THE FALLEN CHIEFTAIN.

Half-mast the banners, toll the bell,
Our great loved Chieftain bravely died.
He stood amid the throng to tell

By kindly grasp his love so wide,
When from a traitor's fiendish hand
A shot was fired that shook the land.

He fell "the greatest of us all,"
Then spread the cloud of gloom o'er head
And Anguish beckoned to our call.

He's gone; he numbers with the dead.
Muffle the drum; play softly now
To soothe the heart and cool the brow.

Speak gently, holy was his life;
Love's gracious hand was at the helm
Commanding, yielding, conquering strife.

Bring flowers, blooming o'er the realm;
They've grown more tender, sweet and fair
With sorrow's burden now to bear.

AN INVOCATION.

The organ's deep and mellow voice was hushed.
A sacred silence calmed each waiting soul.
Before them stood a godly man with hands
Uplifted signaling approach to prayer.
A low clear voice those bowed heads heard say :—
“Our Father, draw us closer to Thyself,
And rest our troubled heads upon thy breast.
Dispel the grim and awful spectre—death !
Again remind us ours are finite minds
And turn our wayward thoughts of death to life.
We feel the shield of thy protecting arm
We know again thy joy of childlike trust.
Infinite Father, God, in this commune
We feel the noble impulse of thy life.”

SINCERITY.

Ah, sweet sincerity, the fairest face
Could envy thy expression and thy grace.

That sympathetic look, that soothing hand,
Which cools my fevered brow and calms my
thought,

Both these are sweet in this combative land ;
To him who fights, must fight again, has fought

In life's affrays. Thy virtue is the power

That holds us true in fierce temptation's hour ;

And this it is that saves us, safe at last,

From that vain thought that man was made in
vain.

The beauty of the flowers is thy cast ;

Though man may claim thee his, for sense of
pain

Is thine, so counts thy healing, soft caress ;

Thou art divine in human loveliness.

LOVE'S TRIBUTE.

She came to earth and walked amid the flowers,
And breathed their fragrance—all so beautiful.
The sweet arbutus bloom was on her cheek;
Her lips the rose bud kissed; and fairer still
Than all the rest, the lily soul within.
The tender sunshine of her eyes shown forth
With rays of gentle, smiling radiance
Which came, the light of a pure and loving heart.
She came and filled the hearts of friends with
 cheer;
And reigned the queen of a bright and happy home.
She came and in the bloom of womanhood,
When life was full of all that she held dear,
With a fond good-bye to her cherished ones,
She fell asleep among the blooming flowers.

SWEET MAIDEN-PURITAN.

Sweet maiden-Puritan!

The morning beam is in thy hair,

Red roses in thy cheek.

The snow white lily calls thee fair,

The tiger lily meek.

The breezes from the mountain side

So softly whisper thee

Those words thy lover did confide

Beneath the old elm tree.

Sweet maiden-Puritan,

In nimble housewife's charming guise

With song thy task is done ;

A mirrored gladness in thy eyes,

Thou art a favored one.

Thy life is like the river deep

Which flows so smooth along

While underneath cross currents sweep ;

Thou standest mild but strong.

Sweet maiden-Puritan,

The church bell sounds the hour of prayer ;

Across the village green

Sedate with gracious modest air

Thy white robed form is seen.

Within God's calm and holy place

Thy spirit finds repose

And on thy lovely upturned face

The light of Christ now shows.

KATHER.

Fair, fragile Kather there is sitting in the autumn
sun,
Her clear blue eyes look from a face of marble,
sweet, benign,
And seem to see, we know not what, yet feel it is
her God.
Each day she wanders to this realm unknown to us
of earth;
And thus she sits, a dainty dweller of another
sphere.
Beside her, holding fast her thin white hand, her
lover sits,
His pleading look, his warm, strong hand brings
back her mind to earth;
A radiance of tenderness and pity beams her face
As she so gently says: "Dear Murry do not feel
so sad,
Though I must leave you! you shall come to me
and be my own.
My sad regret is that my heart was once untrue to
you,
Though then I knew you not, in truth; my heart
did bleed for him
Who loved me not, and earth was dark and dreary
to me then;
But now to live, and live for you, would make
life sweet to me.

It cannot be; but do not cry, for we shall meet
again."

A halo seemed to crown her head, and she was
far away,

Brought back to soothe and pity, now and then, as
sobs were heard;

And still she dwells in other spheres, but now
comes back no more.

THE MAN WITHOUT THE HOE.

The music of a minor key—a dirge,
The plaintive strains which sometimes sob, now
wail.

The north wind shrieks; the elements are fierce.
December—list! it is a human voice.
Out in the cold a man stands trembling, weak,
And impotent; and chants his dirge of life.
The brand of indecision marks his face;
His hands are white, his clothing threadbare, old,
And want compels his listless life to roam.
He dreams of gentle birth, a foundling once;
And deigns to call the man of toil a beast.
The prudish gentleman of poverty,
He shirks the filth of work. To be the guest
Of wealth and style would count him life's success.

Ah, once his life was brighter. Love held sway.
But she who left a happy home to share
His weal and woe, now fills an unknown grave.
She lived and strove for bitter years a slave
To his conceit; and poverty, neglect
And crime, his evil contributions, filled
Her bitter cup too full; and want, disease,
Incessant toil, death—left her children waifs.
God pity him, and pity all the slaves
Of fears of condescension. Give, O give
To them the light of independent thought
Which dares the man to labor with his hands,
To wield the hoe,—not lean, the artist's fool,—
Becoming master of his destiny.

ENNUI.

Now put away your book, dear ; give your time
to me ;

For I'm so tired and lonely, lonely as can be.

How can I well express it,—how I feel today?

It is akin to sadness, yet in some strange way

A pleasure sweet, subdued, pathetic, tempers all,

As though the ache was ceasing after the painful
fall.

I'm here for entertainment, not to entertain ;

So talk the lightest chatter, dear ; do not refrain.

But no, the serious might better suit my mood.

You smile—I'm fitful, foolish, and perhaps it's
rude.

'Tis childish thus to feel,—so much inclined to
cry.

Your hand upon my head ; it aches ; my throat
is dry.

* * * * *

I'm feeling better now—if you will only play !

I'll rest upon the sofa, while in your sweet way

You play those dreamy pieces of plaintive melody ;

They always rest and comfort when I feel ennui.

A REFUGE.

The barn's a lucky refuge,
When the day is drenched with rain,
And darkness makes it gloomy
With our spirits on the wane.

'Tis then I seek the haymow
With its fragrant bed of hay,
And lying there in comfort
I enjoy the rainy day.

The drops keep on increasing
Till they reach a torrent's pour,
And force between the shingles
Drip, drip, drip upon the floor.

The dusty cobwebs hanging
From the rafters overhead
Are threads for weaving fancies
While I'm resting on this bed.

A misty haze surrounds me,
Lifting thought to fairest themes,
For, standing there in beauty,
Is the fairy of my dreams.

Yes, standing in my vision,
With her sweet angelic grace,
That dainty, comely maiden,
With a smile upon her face.

Those eyes that know but loving
 Speak a tenderness serene,
And show a pure, sweet nature
 Which on manly arms should lean.

Oh, oft my heart brims over
 With the love of her dear self!
To think that I, unworthy,
 Have the love of such an elf!

But hark! 'tis John that's calling;
 What he wants we soon shall hear.
Ah, well, the rain is over
 And my dream all spoiled, I fear.

DOLLY'S MOTHER.

Our dolly's little mother rocks her child to sleep ;
So hush, my baby.

She sings and rocks and sings her lullaby with peep
At her sweet baby.

With loving arms she folds her darling to her
breast,
Her dolly baby ;

And tenderly down she lays her precious child
to rest ;
So sleep, dear baby.

That sweet, maternal, chubby, little mother child
Tucks in her baby

With soft caress ; and leaves with anxious look
and mild
Her sleeping baby.

THE MINIATURE MAN.

A boy with yellow curls and dresses like the girls
But yesterday.

A man in miniature with pants and coat, it's sure,
He stands today.

What pride in his survey as he will gaily say,
With joyful bound,

"My papa bought me these," and then a hand
he'll seize

And frolic round.

He skips upon the floor, and bounces out the door,
To play with boys.

He runs with boistrous glee and splits our ears,
may me,

With shouts and noise.

A WITCH.

Now see her as she stands with artless grace,
A roguish smile lights up her handsome face,
And gleeful laughter fills her star-lit eyes,
Which show a blissful spirit underlies
 The glad expression.

The cadence of her dulcet voice we hear;
It chimes a rippling laughter in the ear;
So ready for the playful jest is she,
And from all vain deceit we find her free
 And unassuming.

This flower of innocence and youthful bloom
Finds many victims of enchantment's doom;
The winsome ways of her endearing charms
Inclines the heart to hold her in his arms,
 She's so bewitching.

THE OLD MILL.

While straying through the forest on a bright,
warm autumn day,
My mind attuned its vision to the scenes which
round me lay;
A gala show of brightness clothed the sombre
wood with tints,
And tinged the grave, sweet autumn, with some
thoughts of lighter hints.

Along an old-time roadway, where the wheel-
marks now are dim,
And trees have crowded over, leaving but a path
for him
Who walks this way, I sauntered at my ease.
Beneath my feet
The spalty twigs made snap and crackle, startling
to retreat,
Advance, and both at once it seemed; the squirrel
from the bough,
Whose scolding chatter sounded through the
wood,—a teasing vow.

And thus my aimless strolling brought me to a
time-worn mill,
Whose broken-down appearance was a theme for
artist's skill;
And there I stood and pondered o'er the things
which have a past,

And wondered what the mill had seen from first
its years to last.

Beside it ran a little brook as young and bright
and free

As when it turned the mill-wheel round, long
years ago, with glee.

The wheel long-gone, and dusky looked the
tumbled mill as lights

And shadows played their antics on its sides with
gay delights.

Like gloomy age it stooped beneath the lofty trees
around,

A solemn figure in that forest's presence hushed
from sound.

THE WOOD.

How like a fairy-land is this! How fresh
And green and beautiful's the world outside!
As here I sit on soft, fresh moss, so near
The brook which speeds along with murmurings,
And watch stray sunbeams flick'ring down through
The foliage which forms this leafy shade,
I know—to me, at least, a paradise
I've found. No selfish passionate desire
Here mars the flow of tranquil thought; and here
I list to music which is heard without
Regard to some set, fashioned rule of art;
And, listening, I think that nature's sweet,
Glad melodies have charms surpassing all
Acquirements men have studied and obtained.
No flaw distracts the mind when to the ear
The warbler's notes come like the overflow
Of a happy soul. No conscious pride, no mark
Of affectation, breaks the harmony.

A calm enchantment fills the wood! and yet,
How oft we walk with bowed head and brow
Reflecting care, and all around a dark,
Drear aspect seems to wear. A pleasant word,
Some cheerful news, a small success, and all
The world is changed. New objects come to view.
New scenes abound in old, familiar haunts,
A new life dwells within, and everything

Reflects the sunny hope and happiness
With which the world has been made cheerful,
bright.

Now, hearken! 'Tis the dinner bell which calls
The farmer from his work. With daily toil
Half done, he seeks his mid-day meal. Those
fields,

With broad expanse of swaying grain, are his.
He sowed those fields and he may reap; and rich
The recompense may be for all he's done.
His mind a world within those acres finds.
The hard-earned dollars represented there
Increase his love of gain; and toil he will,
And scrimp and spare and save, with mind intent
On acquisition as the years pass by.

Come back, now thought, to this fair silvan scene,
And let the world of trade be veiled from view.
That great perserver and destroyer, Change,
Is ever ling'ring in our hearts; and he
It is who pulls the cord that rings the bell
Of time; for all is transient in our world.

BENEATH THE MAPLES.

The morning sun with brightness cheers the earth,
Beneath the maples is a fairy berth.
Tall mountains in the distance, capped with blue,
Green hills and fields are nearer to the view.
The farmyard cackle makes a distant sound;
The locust pours in its one shrill note around.
The air the sunshine fills with golden haze,
And sweetly lonely sound fair nature's lays.
The earth, the air, the sky, in calm repose,
While upward, Godward, thought and feeling goes.
A taste of Heaven's unpolluted bliss
Alone could know of rapture like to this.

'Tis good to know this spell and feel its charm,
For finer feelings, purer thoughts disarm
The coarser self from selfish greed and lust,
And tune the life to manhood, God our trust.
Mere business may be prose and need no wings
For fairy flight, no voice which laughs and sings;
But he who sees and tastes not beauty's store,
Nor feels an inspiration raise and pour,
At times, its soothing spirit through his soul,
With coarser foods his finer sense cajole.
So why not come when duty grants our choice,
And rest beneath the trees and hear the voice
Which lifts us from the common place to where
We find ecstatic beauty rich and rare?

DISCRETION.

Kind friend, best counsellor, and safest guide,
In whom no trace of lowly brute is found,
Humanity, the greatest good,—the sound
To him is sweet,—shines forth with modest pride
Upon a face whose mouth will now deride
Whatever dooms the morrow to regret,—
Those things so oft recurring we'd forget,
If he would let them slumber where they hide.
A manly form with Health and Strength as
heirs,
A noble brow and deeply thoughtful eyes,
A brain with large intelligence he dares
To do the thing that's best to do, and tries
Precaution's sage advice, and keeps in view
The end that passion, unrestrained, leads you.

HONESTY.

The noblest man of all the human race!
Thy goodness shows upon his honest face.
And genius never wrought a work of power,
Unless we find the impress of thy hand
Revealing true the looks, the acts, the hour
That suit the theme for which they truly stand.
A Hawthorne in his fiction lends a charm
To the fanciful by thy supporting arm.
E'en falsehood knows thy worth, for he is sure
To feign thy virtues and to don thy clothes,
Thereby to gain a trust, and thus procure
Suspicion's banishment,—the foe he loathes.
Without thee men would be but sneaking knaves,
And this a world of masters and of slaves.

VERMONT.

Fair land, my native state beloved, to thee—
Thy mountains verdure clad, and valleys green
Thy rivers, brooks, each prattling brooklet seen,
To these that Nature made so fair and free—
I look with rev'rent eyes today to see
The impress of thy Maker's hand; and feel
His presence, smiling ev'rywhere, reveal
To me a glimpse of His divinity.
Thy sons and daughters, children of thy hills,
Have breathed from childhood thy pure air, and
 drunk
From crystal springs the draught that knows no
 ills.
And found the dell or upland barky trunk
A friend. So close to nature all your own
They've lived thy image in their souls has grown.

A PATHETIC PICTURE.

A stooping figure totters there,
Grown older by defeat and care.
Those eyes so sunken now and dim,
Once showed a burning fire in him;
That hand that feebly holds the cane,
Then grasped the sword and led the main.
The husky voice so slow of speech
Has sounded clear, and in its reach
An awe has passed from ear to ear
That held them dumb that would not hear.
Now slow intelligence he speaks
Who once had spoken lightning streaks.
The saddest thought of all we find,—
This fading dimness of the mind.
Ah, soon beneath the sod he'll lie,
Nor seems it sad that he should die,
For earth no longer holds him charms.
They're past! he meekly folds his arms
To wait the hour when he shall go
And hide from earth his crest of snow.

THE POOR MAN'S PLAINT.

Gaunt and hungry looks the poor man,
In his dress of shabby clothes ;
And he says : "The curse of living
Comes because, as each man knows,
Mammon's scramblers win.

"In the city with its workshops,
In its avenues of trade,
In pursuits of country places,
On the farm with hoe and spade,
Mammon's scramblers win.

"In the folds of the professions,
Doctors, lawyers, preachers, too ;
There the service of the leaders
Who compose the chosen few,
Mammon's scramblers win.

"In the race for public office
To be counsellors of state ;
For the voice in party matters
Which decides the party's fate,
Mammon's scramblers win.

"In the strife of all the nations
To procure the sov'reign sway ;
In the heat of competition
To control commercial way
Mammon's scramblers win."

Thus in slums of destitution,
 'Mid the rancid filth that's there,
Stands the poor man, vainly prating :
 "Of the great, the lion's share,
 Mammon's scramblers win."

THE CEASELESS GRIND.

The strong and buoyant form of youth,

At dawn of day,

Was ready to ascend the steep,

Whate'er the way.

With reckless pace he started forth

To scale the height,

But soon he lost the rainbow tints

Of youth and light

In ceaseless grind for bread.

The poet felt a thrill of life

Flow into song.

He grasped the pen to make fair Art

His spell prolong,

And wrote he swift and wrote he well,

But dropped the pen

When conscious that his lot was with

The host of men,

Of ceaseless grind for bread.

The spirit of reform awoke

Within the soul

Of many in the land to lift

As one the whole

Great human race to brotherhood;

But when poor Need

Cried out for help, the mass were dumb,—

They could but heed

Their ceaseless grind for bread.

THE WISE DEMAND.

No; burn the written verses, burn them now;
They have no blood, no life and so I vow
They shall not see the light. My word is law;
My headache knows their source; my brain the
flaw;

So burn them. Yes, methought the picture true;
The blood then tingled in my veins, but rue
The thought that airy visions have no breath,
No pulse, no mind, no speech but speaks like death.
That dreamy something makes me sick at heart;
Now take it from me, death deserves its part.
I thought 'twould breathe or at the least have sight
When once in contact with the air and light;
But no, the flavor of a moody mind,
Subjection in its thought, is all we find.

At times the skyward seems a place of worth;
Today the human walk upon the earth.
The devil with his horns and hoofs today
Suits better than the evil and its way.
Before us is the world with seething life;
We view it heedlessly—then prate of strife.
It is the few who see and point to some
True beauty known by us so oft to come
And go—in fact a daily household scene;
But fool-work mostly even theirs, I ween.
A poem's life is rhythm of thought—not word;

And calling varnished scare-crows men, absurd.
The key-note sounded, then begins the theme,
But ten to one the chances it will seem
At first good music, then a hollow sound,
At last discordant nothingness is found.
No, burn the verses, burn them now I say,
All's lifeless, dead, so put the corse away.

THE VOICE OF THE MANIAC.

Dark, darker than the darkest midnight gloom,
The clouds of reason float above his head,
While he within the madhouse finds his doom.

A hollow voice moans "better were he dead."
Unseemly ebulates his speech
Until it hisses in a screech.
"Old empire, break!" he cries,
"To pieces, fly!" then sighs
That ominous "decline."

A soldier of the King in Afric's land
He fought the stubborn Boer in many frays
Until old gent Excess with velvet hand
Led him an abject slave through darksome ways.
Unseemly ebulates his speech
Until it hisses in a screech.
"Old empire, break!" he cries,
"To pieces, fly!" then sighs
That ominous "decline."

He saw the new dug grave where Justice stood
In protest that a brave wee nation's life
Should die to feed an empire's lustihood.
With him, the victor's son, dry rot is rife;
Unseemly ebulates his speech
Until it hisses in a screech.
"Old empire, break!" he cries,
"To pieces, fly!" then sighs
That ominous "decline."

SPAIDS.

My name is Spaid's of the land of shades,
But you have never seen me.
I come at night, when dim's your sight,
And so move and affright thee.
Lie still and slumber, be at ease.
It is the wind, think what you please.
There's footsteps, sounding in the hall;
They are the cats and that is all.
But no, a sigh, a groan quite near!
Be calm; you're trembling now with fear.
Again it comes and nearer still!
A sound that brings a quaking chill!
And you have covered o'er your head
The bed-quilt of your lonely bed.
Ah see me! here I stand serene;
Look once, and that will cure your spleen.
For me foul murders have a charm
And groans of victims no alarm.
A rustle in the closet sounds,
For I am going all my rounds.
Now look! but I am safe from view;
Behind the door I wait for you.
Yes, listen with a thumping heart
And close abated breath and start
At every move. It does me good
To see the sweat come, as it should,
Upon your brow with head just raised

With new-born courage badly dazed.
I'm death itself in stillness now,
Which serves my purpose and my vow
That sleep your eyelids shall not see
Until the time it pleases me.
O lonely, lonely, lonely night!
Move on a pace and lift the blight
From this lone room, I hear you breathe.
Aha! my vengeance I'll not sheathe.
Relaxed and resting are you? Well,
I'll break your little peaceful spell.
What's that? The vacant chamber door.
You're nervous tonight and I'm a bore.
But list! what is it? thud, thud, thud!
Which sounds the awful blood, blood, blood!
This way it comes and nearer yet!
No time to think or feel regret,
For at this door a pause is made.
Oh, can his entrance yet be staid?
The breathless seconds seem like years!
Your hair stands straight from palsied fears!
Now down the hall the sounds recede
Till fainter, fainter still we heed
The echo of a distant tread.
Lie back and slumber in your bed.
There's much that's strange in your small range
Well known as fancy's dangers,
And I am Spuids of the land of shades
So we're not wholly strangers.

THE SEQUENCE.

The road is long and has no turn,
I've heard folks say with some concern
They doubtless thought in some strange way
They'd be made rich on some fine day.
But crooked or straight or good or ill,
What matters it when men stand still?
The hard is up, the easy down;
The one leads home, the next to town.
Friend Squibs and I may sip the stout
When of an evening we are out.
And once a stormy winter's night
We started home quite late, but right.
What streets we took I can't quite say,
Though somehow got outside our way.
We tried to wander back again,
Perhaps we did; I won't say when.
Our lives have mysteries in store,
And sometimes whys and wherefores bore.
When morning came, oh, where were we?—
At home, of course—where should we be?

L. of C.

THE BOER'S LEGACY.

Still shouts the clarion voice of freedom: Fight!
Fight! fight the grasping Briton from our land!
Unconquered live, unconquered die, with hand
Supporting liberty, our dearest right.
O Freedom! listen to our earnest plea!
Our God! we now look up for strength to Thee,
And ask but what the lowly Christ would give,
Our nation's life, our homes in which we live.

Our homes are gone, our comrades fighting fell;
Within those hellish camps our women swell
The tide of death; old men now prostrate lie,—
Infirm with age and want, they waste and die.
But freedom lives! our scattered bands still fight;
They hold their stand against an empire's might.
The Briton knows our rifle's voice full well
As out across the veldt it speaks his knell.

Stand fast, O comrades! die the noble death,
That freedom still may live without our breath.
Stand, fight: We once enjoyed our nation's life.
Aye, fight for father, mother, children, wife.
Let not the finger point a coward's quake;
And Time will say: "They died for freedom's
sake;"
For freedom's sake now fire again; they flee
Before the quenchless spirit of the free!

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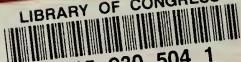
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